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Item 575
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Public Law 96-458
96th Congress

An Act

To revise the composition of the judicial councils of the Federal judicial circuits, to establish a procedure for the processing of complaints against Federal judges, and for other purposes.

Oct. 15, 1980
[S. 1873]

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

Judicial Councils Reform and Judicial Conduct and Disability Act of 1980.
28 USC 1 note.

SHORT TITLE

SECTION 1. This Act may be cited as the "Judicial Councils Reform and Judicial Conduct and Disability Act of 1980".

JUDICIAL COUNCILS OF THE CIRCUITS

Meetings.

SEC. 2. (a) Section 332(a) of title 28, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

"(a)(1) The chief judge of each judicial circuit shall call, at least twice in each year and at such places as he may designate, a meeting of the judicial council of the circuit, consisting of—

"(A) the chief judge of the circuit, who shall preside;

"(B) that number of circuit judges fixed by majority vote of all such judges in regular active service; and

"(C) that number of district judges of the circuit fixed by majority vote of all circuit judges in regular active service, except that—

"(i) if the number of circuit judges fixed in accordance with subparagraph (B) of this paragraph is less than six, the number of district judges fixed in accordance with this subparagraph shall be no less than two; and

"(ii) if the number of circuit judges fixed in accordance with subparagraph (B) of this paragraph is six or more, the number of district judges fixed in accordance with this subparagraph shall be no less than three.

"(2) Members of the council shall serve for terms established by a majority vote of all judges of the circuit in regular active service.

"(3) The number of circuit and district judges fixed in accordance with paragraphs (1)(B) and (1)(C) of this subsection shall be set by order of the court of appeals for the circuit no less than six months prior to a scheduled meeting of the council so constituted.

"(4) Only circuit and district judges in regular active service shall serve as members of the council.

"(5) No more than one district judge from any one district shall serve simultaneously on the council, unless at least one district judge from each district within the circuit is already serving as a member of the council.

Replacement members.

"(6) In the event of the death, resignation, retirement, or disability of a member of the council, a replacement member shall be designated to serve the remainder of the unexpired term by the chief judge of the circuit.

"(7) Each member of the council shall attend each council meeting unless excused by the chief judge of the circuit.".

(b) Section 332(c) of title 28, United States Code, is amended by striking out "quarterly" and inserting in lieu thereof "semi-annually".

(c) Section 332(d) of title 28, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

"(d)(1) Each judicial council shall make all necessary and appropriate orders for the effective and expeditious administration of justice within its circuit. Each council is authorized to hold hearings, to take sworn testimony, and to issue subpoenas and subpoenas duces tecum. Subpoenas and subpoenas duces tecum shall be issued by the clerk of the court of appeals, at the direction of the chief judge of the circuit or his designee and under the seal of the court, and shall be served in the manner provided in rule 45(c) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure for subpoenas and subpoenas duces tecum issued on behalf of the United States or an officer or agency thereof.

28 USC app.

"(2) All judicial officers and employees of the circuit shall promptly carry into effect all orders of the judicial council.

"(3) Unless an impediment to the administration of justice is involved, regular business of the courts need not be referred to the council.".

(d)(1) The section heading for section 332 of title 28, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

"§ 332. Judicial councils of circuits".

(2) The item relating to section 332 in the section analysis for chapter 15 of title 28, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

"332. Judicial councils of circuits.".

PROCEDURES WITHIN JUDICIAL COUNCILS

Complaints.

SEC. 3. (a) Section 372 of title 28, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end thereof the following new subsection:

"(c)(1) Any person alleging that a circuit, district, or bankruptcy judge, or a magistrate, has engaged in conduct prejudicial to the effective and expeditious administration of the business of the courts, or alleging that such a judge or magistrate is unable to discharge all the duties of office by reason of mental or physical disability, may file with the clerk of the court of appeals for the circuit a written complaint containing a brief statement of the facts constituting such conduct.

"(2) Upon receipt of a complaint filed under paragraph (1) of this subsection, the clerk shall promptly transmit such complaint to the chief judge of the circuit, or, if the conduct complained of is that of the chief judge, to that circuit judge in regular active service next senior in date of commission (hereafter, for purposes of this subsection only, included in the term 'chief judge'). The clerk shall simultaneously transmit a copy of the complaint to the judge or magistrate whose conduct is the subject of the complaint.

"(3) After expeditiously reviewing a complaint, the chief judge, by written order stating his reasons, may—

"(A) dismiss the complaint, if he finds it to be (i) not in conformity with paragraph (1) of this subsection, (ii) directly related to the merits of a decision or procedural ruling, or (iii) frivolous; or

"(B) conclude the proceeding if he finds that appropriate corrective action has been taken.

The chief judge shall transmit copies of his written order to the complainant and to the judge or magistrate whose conduct is the subject of the complaint.

"(4) If the chief judge does not enter an order under paragraph (3) of this subsection, such judge shall promptly— Special committee.

"(A) appoint himself and equal numbers of circuit and district judges of the circuit to a special committee to investigate the facts and allegations contained in the complaint;

"(B) certify the complaint and any other documents pertaining thereto to each member of such committee; and

"(C) provide written notice to the complainant and the judge or magistrate whose conduct is the subject of the complaint of the action taken under this paragraph.

"(5) Each committee appointed under paragraph (4) of this subsection shall conduct an investigation as extensive as it considers necessary, and shall expeditiously file a comprehensive written report thereon with the judicial council of the circuit. Such report shall present both the findings of the investigation and the committee's recommendations for necessary and appropriate action by the judicial council of the circuit. Investigation.

"(6) Upon receipt of a report filed under paragraph (5) of this subsection, the judicial council—

"(A) may conduct any additional investigation which it considers to be necessary;

"(B) shall take such action as is appropriate to assure the effective and expeditious administration of the business of the courts within the circuit, including, but not limited to, any of the following actions:

"(i) directing the chief judge of the district of the magistrate whose conduct is the subject of the complaint to take such action as the judicial council considers appropriate;

"(ii) certifying disability of a judge appointed to hold office during good behavior whose conduct is the subject of the complaint, pursuant to the procedures and standards provided under subsection (b) of this section;

"(iii) requesting that any such judge appointed to hold office during good behavior voluntarily retire, with the provision that the length of service requirements under section 371 of this title shall not apply; 28 USC 371.

"(iv) ordering that, on a temporary basis for a time certain, no further cases be assigned to any judge or magistrate whose conduct is the subject of a complaint;

"(v) censuring or reprimanding such judge or magistrate by means of private communication;

"(vi) censuring or reprimanding such judge or magistrate by means of public announcement; or

"(vii) ordering such other action as it considers appropriate under the circumstances, except that (I) in no circumstances may the council order removal from office of any judge appointed to hold office during good behavior, and (II) any removal of a magistrate shall be in accordance with section 631 of this title and any removal of a bankruptcy judge shall be in accordance with section 153 of this title; and 28 USC 631. 28 USC 153.

"(C) shall immediately provide written notice to the complainant and to such judge or magistrate of the action taken under this paragraph.

Complaint referral.

"(7)(A) In addition to the authority granted under paragraph (6) of this subsection, the judicial council may, in its discretion, refer any complaint under this subsection, together with the record of any associated proceedings and its recommendations for appropriate action, to the Judicial Conference of the United States.

"(B) In any case in which the judicial council determines, on the basis of a complaint and an investigation under this subsection, or on the basis of information otherwise available to the council, that a judge appointed to hold office during good behavior has engaged in conduct—

USC prec. title 1.

"(i) which might constitute one or more grounds for impeachment under article I of the Constitution; or

"(ii) which, in the interest of justice, is not amenable to resolution by the judicial council,

the judicial council shall promptly certify such determination, together with any complaint and a record of any associated proceedings, to the Judicial Conference of the United States.

Written notice.

"(C) A judicial council acting under authority of this paragraph shall, unless contrary to the interests of justice, immediately submit written notice to the complainant and to the judge or magistrate whose conduct is the subject of the action taken under this paragraph.

Impeachment determination.

"(8) Upon referral or certification of any matter under paragraph (7) of this subsection, the Judicial Conference, after consideration of the prior proceedings and such additional investigation as it considers appropriate, shall by majority vote take such action, as described in paragraph (6)(B) of this subsection, as it considers appropriate. If the Judicial Conference concurs in the determination of the council, or makes its own determination, that consideration of impeachment may be warranted, it shall so certify and transmit the determination and the record of proceedings to the House of Representatives for whatever action the House of Representatives considers to be necessary.

Transmittal to House of Representatives.

Subpoena powers.

"(9)(A) In conducting any investigation under this subsection, the judicial council, or a special committee appointed under paragraph (4) of this subsection, shall have full subpoena powers as provided in section 332(d) of this title.

Ante, p. 2036.

"(B) In conducting any investigation under this subsection, the Judicial Conference, or a standing committee appointed by the Chief Justice under section 331 of this title, shall have full subpoena powers as provided in that section.

28 USC 331.

Review petitions.

"(10) A complainant, judge, or magistrate aggrieved by a final order of the chief judge under paragraph (3) of this subsection may petition the judicial council for review thereof. A complainant, judge, or magistrate aggrieved by an action of the judicial council under paragraph (6) of this subsection may petition the Judicial Conference of the United States for review thereof. The Judicial Conference, or the standing committee established under section 331 of this title, may grant a petition filed by a complainant, judge, or magistrate under this paragraph. Except as expressly provided in this paragraph, all orders and determinations, including denials of petitions for review, shall be final and conclusive and shall not be judicially reviewable on appeal or otherwise.

"(11) Each judicial council and the Judicial Conference may prescribe such rules for the conduct of proceedings under this subsection, including the processing of petitions for review, as each considers to be appropriate. Such rules shall contain provisions requiring that—

"(A) adequate prior notice of any investigation be given in writing to the judge or magistrate whose conduct is the subject of the complaint;

"(B) the judge or magistrate whose conduct is the subject of the complaint be afforded an opportunity to appear (in person or by counsel) at proceedings conducted by the investigating panel, to present oral and documentary evidence, to compel the attendance of witnesses or the production of documents, to cross-examine witnesses, and to present argument orally or in writing; and

"(C) the complainant be afforded an opportunity to appear at proceedings conducted by the investigating panel, if the panel concludes that the complainant could offer substantial information.

Any rule promulgated under this subsection shall be a matter of public record, and any such rule promulgated by a judicial council may be modified by the Judicial Conference.

"(12) No judge or magistrate whose conduct is the subject of an investigation under this subsection shall serve upon a special committee appointed under paragraph (4) of this subsection, upon a judicial council, upon the Judicial Conference, or upon the standing committee established under section 331 of this title, until all related proceedings under this subsection have been finally terminated. Judge or magistrate under investigation. 28 USC 331.

"(13) No person shall be granted the right to intervene or to appear as amicus curiae in any proceeding before a judicial council or the Judicial Conference under this subsection.

"(14) All papers, documents, and records of proceedings related to investigations conducted under this subsection shall be confidential and shall not be disclosed by any person in any proceeding unless— Confidentiality.

"(A) the judicial council of the circuit, the Judicial Conference of the United States, or the Senate or the House of Representatives by resolution, releases any such material which is believed necessary to an impeachment investigation or trial of a judge under article I of the Constitution; or USC prec. title 1.

"(B) authorized in writing by the judge or magistrate who is the subject to the complaint and by the chief judge of the circuit, the Chief Justice, or the chairman of the standing committee established under section 331 of this title.

"(15) Each written order to implement any action under paragraph (6)(B) of this subsection, which is issued by a judicial council, the Judicial Conference, or the standing committee established under section 331 of this title, shall be made available to the public through the appropriate clerk's office of the court of appeals for the circuit. Unless contrary to the interests of justice, each such order issued under this paragraph shall be accompanied by written reasons therefor.

"(16) Except as expressly provided in this subsection, nothing in this subsection shall be construed to affect any other provision of this title, the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure, the Federal Rules of Appellate Procedure, or the Federal Rules of Evidence. 28 USG app. 18 USC app., 28 USC app. 18 USC app.

"(17) The Court of Claims, the Court of Customs and Patent Appeals, and the Customs Court shall each prescribe rules, consistent with the foregoing provisions of this subsection, establishing procedures for the filing of complaints with respect to the conduct of any judge of such court and for the investigation and resolution of such complaints. In investigating and taking action with respect to any Complaint filing, rules.

such complaint, each such court shall have the powers granted to a judicial council under this subsection.".

(b) The section heading for section 372 of title 28, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

"§ 372. Retirement for disability; substitute judge on failure to retire; judicial discipline.".

(c) The item relating to section 372 in the section analysis for chapter 17 of title 28, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

"372. Retirement for disability; substitute judge on failure to retire; judicial discipline.".

AUTHORITY OF THE JUDICIAL CONFERENCE

SEC. 4. The fourth undesignated paragraph of section 331 of title 28, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

"The Conference shall make a comprehensive survey of the condition of business in the courts of the United States and prepare plans for assignment of judges to or from circuits or districts where necessary. It shall also submit suggestions and recommendations to the various courts to promote uniformity of management procedures and the expeditious conduct of court business. The Conference is authorized to exercise the authority provided in section 372(c) of this title as the Conference, or through a standing committee. If the Conference elects to establish a standing committee, it shall be appointed by the Chief Justice and all petitions for review shall be reviewed by that committee. The Conference or the standing committee may hold hearings, take sworn testimony, issue subpoenas and subpoenas duces tecum, and make necessary and appropriate orders in the exercise of its authority. Subpoenas and subpoenas duces tecum shall be issued by the clerk of the Supreme Court or by the clerk of any court of appeals, at the direction of the Chief Justice or his designee and under the seal of the court, and shall be served in the manner provided in rule 45(c) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure for subpoenas and subpoenas duces tecum issued on behalf of the United States or an officer or any agency thereof. The Conference may also prescribe and modify rules for the exercise of the authority provided in section 372(c) of this title. All judicial officers and employees of the United States shall promptly carry into effect all orders of the Judicial Conference or the standing committee established pursuant to this section.".

Ante, p. 2036.

28 USC app.

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF UNITED STATES COURTS

SEC. 5. Section 604 of title 28, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

"(h)(1) The Director shall, out of funds appropriated for the operation and maintenance of the courts, provide facilities and pay necessary expenses incurred by the judicial councils of the circuits and the Judicial Conference under section 372 of this title, including mileage allowance and witness fees, at the same rate as provided in section 1821 of this title. Administrative and professional assistance from the Administrative Office of the United States Courts may be requested by each judicial council and the Judicial Conference for purposes of discharging their duties under section 372 of this title.

"(2) The Director of the Administrative Office of the United States Courts shall include in his annual report filed with the Congress

Facilities and expenses.

28 USC 372.

28 USC 1821.

under this section a summary of the number of complaints filed with each judicial council under section 372(c) of this title, indicating the general nature of such complaints and the disposition of those complaints in which action has been taken.". *Ante*, p. 2036.

AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS

SEC. 6. There are authorized to be appropriated such sums as may be necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act. 28 USC 331 note.

EFFECTIVE DATE

SEC. 7. This Act shall become effective on October 1, 1981. 28 USC 331 note.

Approved October 15, 1980.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY:

HOUSE REPORT No. 96-1313 accompanying H.R. 7974 (Comm. on the Judiciary).
SENATE REPORT No. 96-362 (Comm. on the Judiciary).
CONGRESSIONAL RECORD:
Vol. 125 (1979): Oct. 30, considered and passed Senate.
Vol. 126 (1980): Sept. 15, H.R. 7974 considered and passed House; passage vacated and S. 1873, amended, passed in lieu.
Sept. 30, Senate concurred in House amendments with amendments.
Oct. 1, House concurred in Senate amendments.
WEEKLY COMPILATION OF PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS:
Vol. 16, No. 42 (1980): Oct. 15, Presidential statement.

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